

Northeast Historical Archaeology

Volume 12 1983 *Symposium on Archaeology of the
Revolutionary War Period Held at New Windsor
Cantonment State Historic Site, New Windsor, New
York*

Article 5

1983

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Recommended Citation

Fisher, Charles L. (1983) "Archaeology at New Windsor Cantonment: Construction and Social Reproduction at a Revolutionary War Encampment," *Northeast Historical Archaeology*: Vol. 12 12, Article 5.
<https://doi.org/10.22191/neha/vol12/iss1/5> Available at: <http://orb.binghamton.edu/neha/vol12/iss1/5>

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Cover Page Footnote

A cooperative agreement between the Town of New Windsor, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission enabled this research. I would like to thank those who produced this agreement, particularly Jim Gold, John Lovell, Howard Miller and John Petro. The archaeology unit of the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Bureau of Historic Sites conducted the fieldwork and contributed to the research and analysis reported here. I appreciate the comments of Paul Huey, Lois Feister and Dennis Wentworth on an earlier version of this paper.

Archaeology at New Windsor Cantonment: Construction and Social Reproduction at a Revolutionary War Encampment

by Charles L. Fisher

INTRODUCTION

The left wing of the Continental Army, under Major General Heath, arrived at New Windsor on the 28th of October 1782 to erect their winter encampment. They marched from Verplanck's Point on the Hudson River where they met and celebrated with French troops returning from Yorktown. Although it was unknown to the soldiers at the time, the cantonment at New Windsor was the last winter encampment of the Continental Army which began to disband on June 2, 1783. Between October 28, 1782, and September 2, 1783 (when the cantonment buildings were auctioned), New Windsor Cantonment was a "log city" of approximately 700 buildings and 6,000 to 8,000 people.

Many aspects of the selection, construction, and demolition of this site are recorded in the historical record. However, additional details of this process, as well as the material conditions of day-to-day life at this site, may be further explored through combined archaeological and historical investigation. In 1981 archaeologists from the Bureau of Historic Sites of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation began a study of portions of this site. Since New Windsor Cantonment is currently located in a rapidly developing area, the initial goals of this study involved the documentation of existing conditions, the location and mapping of remains, and an evaluation of available documentary sources in light of archaeological examination.

A PERSPECTIVE FOR ANALYSIS

This research has provided a fairly detailed picture of the spatial organization of this encampment. The perspective of conflict theory has been applied to the New Windsor Cantonment in order to describe this site and the processes that created it. The focus is on the different antagonistic social groups that were present and how their inherent conflicts were resolved. It requires a consideration of ideology, since this is the vehicle by which structural conflict in society is mediated. Ideology, as the cultural representation of social relations, focuses our attention on the historical context of daily life at this site.

Ideology refers to the concepts of time, objects, and space involved in the construction of the cantonment. While the unconscious assumptions "taken-for-granted" in everyday life serve to reduce structural

conflict, ideology may also mask this conflict by presenting another (and different) relationship between social groups. This alternative relationship prevents "class consciousness" from developing and provides a set of assumptions for everyday life that crosscut class boundaries.

THE CANTONMENT AS AN ARTIFACT

Artifacts may be considered as reflections of the processes which produced them (Leone 1977; Handsman 1982). Artifacts are more than man-made objects; they are also indicators of the social conditions under which they were made (Marx 1967:180). Current interpreters of Marx emphasize that;

...Production is not merely the making of products: the term signifies on the one hand "spiritual" production that is to say creations (including social time and space), and on the other material production or the making of things; it also signifies the self-production of a "human being" in the process of historical self-development, which involves the production of social relations (Lefebvre 1971:30-31).

The Continental Army's winter encampment at New Windsor may be readily apparent as material production, the construction of hundreds of log huts and roadways, but it also involves a "spiritual production" and the production of social relations. The archaeological survey and mapping of this site has resulted in a detailed description of the creation (or spiritual production) of social space by the Continental Army during the winter of 1782 and 1783. The cantonment, as a product of the existing social structure and political ideology, may be viewed as a means by which social divisions were sustained, reproduced, and modified (Knox 1982).

SITE LOCATION

New Windsor, New York, was selected for the Continental Army winter encampment of 1782-83 by

Inspector General Baron Von Steuben with Quartermaster General Timothy Pickering...because there was an ample supply of food, water, forage and timber. It was also protected from sudden attacks by the Highlands and West Point and offered maximum flexible movement (Aimone 1973: iv).

Military concern with procuring and transporting supplies was also central to the site selection, since this was a major problem throughout the war. The pre-war market economy developed through reliance upon open waterways, and the distribution of products overland was a constant obstacle to the success of the Continental Army. New Windsor was not only situated close to the Hudson River but at the intersection of several roads, providing access to the north, west,

south, and east. While the potential protection of this site was an important factor in its selection, the available water and land transportation network was a major consideration. As important as the advantages of this location, the perception of its disadvantage is also revealing. The lack of dwellings suitable for officers' residences was noted, since New Windsor contained only 24 dwellings at the time and nearby Newburgh had only 48 (Mailer and Dempsey 1969).

While the problem of providing officers with "suitable" housing reflects the expectations of the social elite in the military, it also shows the manner in which the relationship between social groups was reflected by buildings and distance, with the officers segregated from the camp and living in larger, private quarters. In addition, the selection of New Windsor as the site of the cantonment of 1782-83 satisfied the military concerns for protection and supplies, but at the same time it created the problem of officers' housing. The potential conflicts between the military and townspeople (who would be displaced), among officers for the available housing, and among the officers and soldiers who were going to inhabit the camp were issues for resolution. Only two days after the army arrived at New Windsor, an order referred to the "...Country Covered, and the farmers Houses Crowded with soldiers who are Committing Wanton instances of plunder and outrage to the greate inconvenience and injury

of the inhabitants..." (Lauber 1932:695). The regimental officers were then required to camp with their men. Since the principal geographical effect of racial discrimination in modern America is spatial segregation (Morrill 1974:231), social discrimination within the Revolutionary War cantonment may be reflected by spatial organization. Although the legal system of military orders placed these groups physically together, boundaries to increase social distance were probably established.

SITE STRUCTURE

On the 28th of October, 1782, a General Order from Headquarters at Newburgh remarked As it is expected that the troops will have sufficient time to Cavour themselves Commodiously before the setting of the winter the Genl directs that regularity Convenience and even some degree of Elegance should be attended to in the construction of their Huts - the plans and dimensions of which will be furnished by the Qr Mr Genl as soon as the position for the several corps shall be fixed upon. Any Hutt that shall be Built irregularly In Violation of this order will be demolished (Lauber 1932:694). The positions of the brigades within the cantonment is depicted in the map drawn by Simeon DeWitt dated 1783 (Figure 1). The 1st and 3rd Massachusetts Brigades are all oriented north to south on the east side of

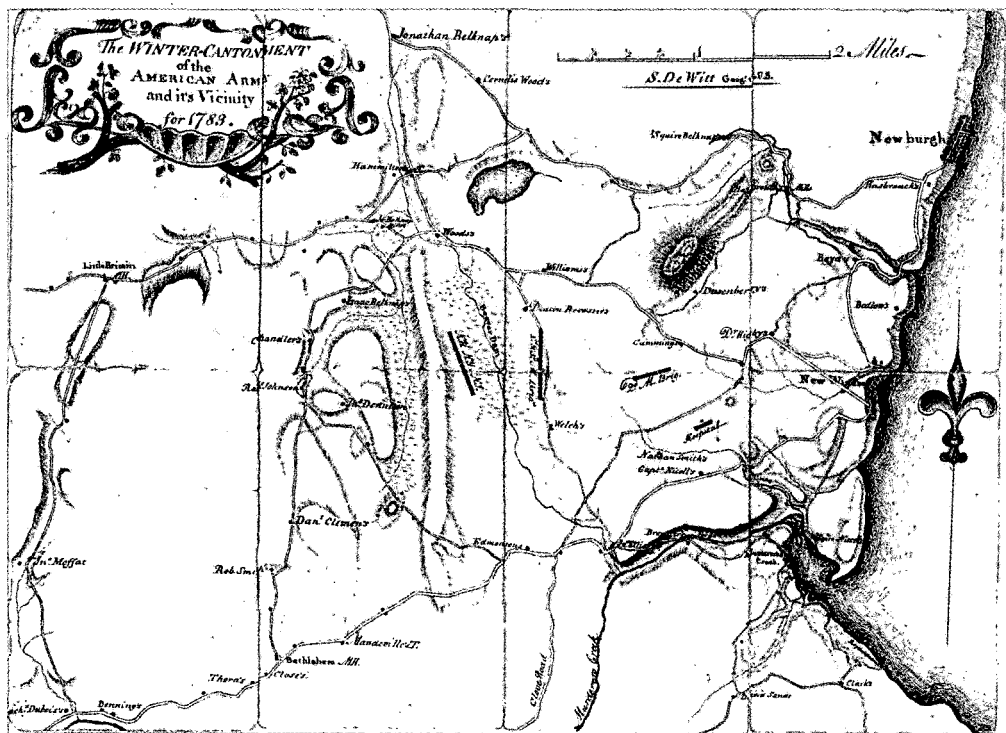


Figure 1. The Winter Cantonment of the American Army and its Vicinity for 1783 by Simeon DeWitt. Courtesy of The New-York Historical Society, New York City.

Beaver Dam (now called Silver Stream), and New Hampshire, New York, and New Jersey regiments are on the west side of the stream. The 2nd Massachusetts Brigade is positioned to the east of the other Massachusetts regiments and aligned east to west. This map also indicates the hospital, which was a group of log huts to the southeast of the 2nd Massachusetts Brigade. The previously existing housing which was utilized by officers is also shown on this map.

This map clearly presents the Continental Army as a collection of state regiments, not a national force. Troops were identified with their states, and regimental officers were actually appointed by state legislatures. Regional variation was even evident in "...the mode of wearing the hair..." since the general orders of March 10, 1783, remarked "...at present there is great difference to be observed among the various corps of the Army." (Fitzpatrick 1938b:205-206). The division between Massachusetts brigades, with the largest number of soldiers, and the regiments of New Jersey, New York, and New Hampshire is clearly marked by the stream and swampland.

This separation of brigades is not easily explained in terms of problems of military organization or resource availability at the cantonment, which could have been solved by a variety of brigade arrangements. It created a need for the construction of a road "...from the Left of the New Hampshire Line to the Nearest main road leading to New Burgh and New Windsor..." (Lauber 1932:700). In addition, a major construction effort was required to connect the two sides across the stream with a causeway.

...A communication between the right and left wings of the Army will be best effected by opening a passage cross the low grounds in a straight direction from the interval between the Jersey and York Brigades, laying the Swamp with saucuns to be covered with Earth taken from drains made on each side the Causeway to carry water into the Creek (Fitzpatrick 1938b:159).

The spatial separation of these brigades may be seen as a method of reducing regional conflict within the army. It has been frequently noted the Massachusetts regiments were particularly difficult for the military because of their democratic tendencies (Kaplan 1950-51).

Massachusetts state and Continental forces were formed from military companies that existed in 1774. These companies elected new officers who, in turn, elected regimental officers. This system eventually changed, but the effect persisted for several years, and the various observers were at times appalled by the fraternization and familiarity between

officers and enlisted men (Symmes 1980:14).

Washington regarded this familiarity between officers and men within the Massachusetts regiments as a particular problem for military discipline. He stated that "...Gentlemen of Fortune and reputable Families generally make the most useful officers" (Fitzpatrick 1931:386-387). In contrast, the aristocratic officer corps of New York were generally wealthy landowners such as Philip van Cortlandt who maintained the proper social distance from their men. In addition, Van Cortlandt (and other wealthy officers) personally advanced money for his troops' food, clothing, and shelter. The lack of these items was a major and constant source of discontent among the soldiers.

A well-documented clash between "aristocratic" and "egalitarian" officers occurred early in the war at Fort Ticonderoga in 1776. A Massachusetts colonel was the subject of an assault by a drunken Pennsylvania officer for maintaining shoemaking tools in his room, where one of his sons worked. This resulted in a riot involving Massachusetts and Pennsylvania troops. The officer was considered "...a serious, good man, but is more conversant with the economy of domestic life than the etiquette practiced in camp" (Thacher 1862:69).

The lack of social qualifications for becoming an officer in the American Army was a source of wonder to a French Officer in New England. "Our innkeeper was a captain, the several military grades being granted here to every rank of people. There are shoemakers who are Colonels; and it often happens that the Americans ask the French Officers what their trade is in France" (Main 1965:213).

Henry Knox, another New England officer at New Windsor, was known for lack of concern regarding some of the privileges of rank. The high salaries of officers

...does not appear to me, in a war like ours, to be right, and I cannot bring myself to think differently, although poverty may be the consequence (Drake 1873:60).

The spatial separation of the regiments divided the troops according to states and the "egalitarian" from the "aristocratic" regions. This separation probably reduced conflict between regions, but it did not eliminate it. For example, four soldiers from the 1st Massachusetts Regiment were tried for breaking into a house on March 17, 1783, where officers of the 1st New Hampshire Regiment were and "...insulting and abusing the Inhabitants and attempting to kill Captain James Frye and Capt. Benjamin Ellis when in execution of their office, and robbing them of a Hatt;..." (Fitzpatrick 1938b:303). Another source of conflict, that between the local community and the Army, was resolved by the establishment of specific locations at the cantonment for

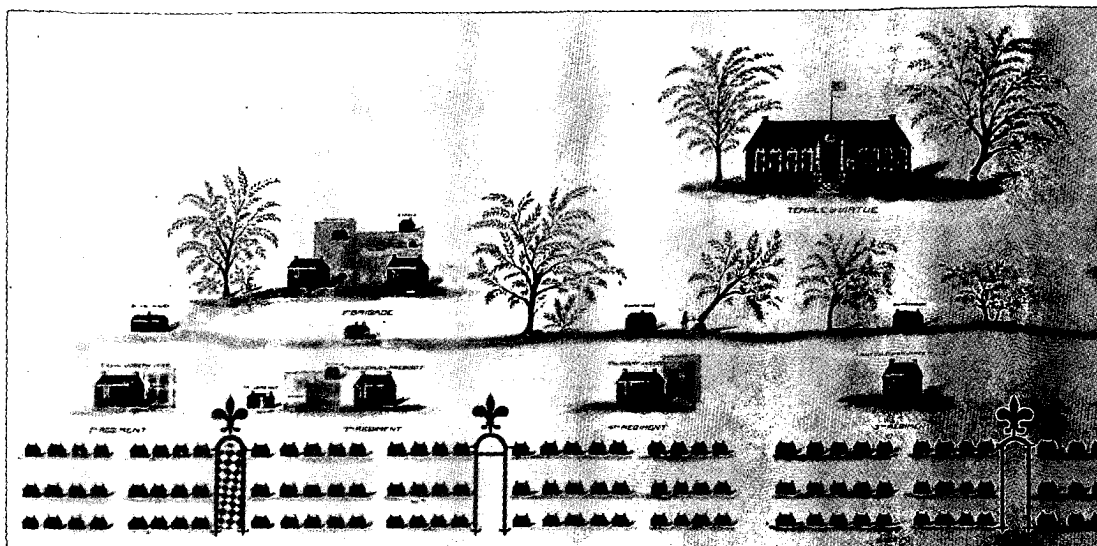


Figure 2. A detail from a Copy of an Original View of the Encampment of the Massachusetts Soldiers During the Last Year of the Revolutionary War by William Tarbell showing the 1st

Massachusetts Brigade area. Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site, Newburgh.

markets. On January 24, 1783, an order from Newburgh referred to events "when country people come to Hutt's marketing they are frequently maltreated and plundered by soldiers...tending to discourage them from returning..."(Fitzpatrick 1938b:62). This led to the appointment of guards at designated market areas, where "provisions, roots, vegetables, etc. designed for the army, are to be exposed to sale..."(Fitzpatrick 1938b:62).

More detailed spatial information is available for the Massachusetts encampment from the drawing by a soldier, William Tarbell (Figure 2). The arrangement of the Massachusetts troops is presented, as well as construction details, names of officers, gardens, stables, and guard houses. The Temple of Virtue, a structure unique to this cantonment, is also shown on the drawing.

The Temple building, the largest structure in the Tarbell view, is also placed at the top of the drawing. This placement suggests the replication of the social hierarchy in the vertical scale of this plan. The location of the 2nd Massachusetts Brigade alongside the 3rd Massachusetts Brigade is an indication that the artist was not attempting to depict the location of the encampment accurately, but has created a "spiritual production" involving social space at the cantonment. The bottom two rows of huts were occupied by enlisted men, with the third row containing regimental "line" officers. This row is placed slightly farther above and away from the enlisted mens' huts than the enlisted mens' huts are from each other.

Above the third row of huts are the regimental officers. These are not depicted in the same fashion as the previous huts, but are

larger, a greater distance apart, more detailed, and shown with gardens and stables. The specific officer's name is placed above his hut.

Above the regimental officers' huts in the Tarbell view is a line of small guard houses separating the brigade officers from everything below. The Temple of Virtue is at the top of this drawing.

Archaeological study has added considerably to this picture of the "social pyramid" at New Windsor Cantonment. Test excavations have located the "necessaries" of the 1st Massachusetts Brigade several hundred feet to the west of the enlisted mens' huts (Fisher 1983). This would place them at the very bottom of the Tarbell drawing, closest to the first row of enlisted mens' huts and the farthest features from the Temple of Virtue. Trash deposits have been reported from the west edge of the parade, about 75 feet west of the enlisted mens' huts (Mead 1980). Behind the line officers' huts, in the third row, associated outbuildings were discovered archaeologically.

In addition, the Tarbell drawing does not indicate the topography of the site. This is of interest because it emphasizes the social hierarchy represented by the placement of the buildings. The Temple of Virtue at the top of the drawing is also on the top of a hill, above the 400-foot contour line. The other buildings descend in order from this hilltop, with the enlisted men at the bottom. Below their huts, the trash area and "sinks" extend almost to the 300-foot contour line. In walking up this hill, a soldier passed through the hierarchy of social positions until the Temple was encountered at the top.

THE TEMPLE OF VIRTUE

On the 25th of December, 1782, the Reverend Dr. Evans' proposal "...for erecting a public building..." was approved by General Washington (Fitzpatrick 1938b:464). The materials and manpower were requested from all the brigades at New Windsor (Boynton 1973:63-64) and included blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, and their assistants. This was one of the largest military buildings constructed by the Continental Army. On the basis of documentary and archaeological evidence, it appears this structure was built of wood on a stone pier foundation and plastered on the interior.

Although it was constructed primarily for religious services, it was used for a variety of social activities. This dual function was recognized by Quartermaster General Pickering, who wrote to his wife

Perhaps you have heard of a large building erecting for the common use of the officers of the Army. Dr. Evans, one of our Chaplains, was, I believe, its projector. He expects to preach in it on Sundays. The officers expect to have their dancing assemblies there (Pickering and Upham 1867:399).

The first use of the Temple was in celebration of the anniversary of the alliance with France. Washington's orders of January 29, 1783, stated

...the General will be happy to see, not only all the officers of the Cantonment, but all the gentlemen of the Army and other Gentlemen and ladies who can attend with convenience at the New building (Boynton 1973:66-67).

The first religious service was held in the Temple on February 23, 1783. However, the use of the building for worship was open to the entire army, not just officers and "gentlemen". Services were conducted throughout the day to allow all the men entry.

...it is directed that divine Service should be performed there every Sunday by the several Chaplains of the New Windsor Cantonment, in rotation and in order that the different brigades may have an opportunity of attending at different hours in the same day...(Fitzpatrick 1938b:135).

The Temple at the cantonment at New Windsor is the only instance of a chapel constructed for religious services during a Revolutionary War encampment of the Continental Army. This unique feature of the site is undeniably related to the unique circumstances present during the winter of 1782-83. Although the war was virtually over, the lack of a peace treaty required maintaining a standing army. In this situation, military discipline was certainly

challenged, and the construction of the Temple building may be viewed as a response to that challenge. The perspective of conflict theory suggests that ideology mediates (and sometimes masks) structural conflict within society. The possibility of an end to the military conflict was present as the Continental Army set up its winter cantonment at New Windsor. This may have served to emphasize the conflicts within the army and between the military and civilian elements of the new nation. The construction of the Temple at New Windsor is an event that emphasizes the role of ideology in the reduction of social conflict.

While the building's use displayed the social differences in the military by separating officers' activities in army administration and social activities, it also brought the enlisted men and officers together in public worship. This building was also the scene of Washington's appeal to the officers that ended a developing mutiny. The officers' discontent over back-pay, unpaid expenses for food and clothing, and the lack of any provision for pensions resulted in their meeting at the Temple to demand action from Congress. This conflict between the military and civilian elite was resolved by Washington, who appeared at the officers' meeting and successfully persuaded them against a confrontation with Congress. By appealing to their patience and patriotism, Washington provided an excellent example of the Temple's role in the ideology of the cantonment and the unconscious assumptions of their everyday life.

OFFICERS' KITCHENS

The last example of social conflict within the cantonment that will be discussed here is derived from the quartermaster's plan for the encampment and the archaeological investigation. The proposed hut plan by Pickering shows small buildings, 12 feet by 12 feet in size behind the line officers' huts, 14 feet by 14 feet in size behind the regimental officers' huts, and 16 feet by 16 feet in size behind the brigade general's hut. These buildings, referred to as officers' kitchens by Pickering, are not present on the Tarbell drawing or the De Witt map. These buildings, located in archaeological excavations, are only 8 feet from the rear of the officers' huts and are centered in placement (Figure 3).

These kitchens were apparently used to prepare the officers' food. Each officer was provided a servant from among the enlisted men, in addition to any personal servant an officer may have brought along. The monthly returns of companies frequently note individuals who went to serve an officer (for example, Lincoln 1971).

These kitchens must have also served as the living quarters for these servants since

they were not present in the companies according to the official returns. An order from Washington in November of 1782 stated "...that officers and others who have drawn men from the Line for Servants...do not send them to their corps to appear at the Monthly inspection..." (Fitzpatrick 1938a:369). At the Morristown Cantonment of 1778-79, outbuildings were present that were referred to as servants' quarters (Rutsch and Peters 1977).

The presence of kitchen buildings for the officers clearly reflects their social privilege. There are a number of possible structural forms which could have accommodated the master-servant relationship. At New Windsor Cantonment the servants were not housed with the officers, or in different parts of a hut, but were in separate and detached buildings.

The proximity of a kitchen to an officer's hut is readily understandable in terms of its function, but its separateness is not as apparent. The location of kitchens may be attributed to the problem the officer corps presented for the Continental Army. It was a source of constant conflict, causing scholars to refer to it as the Army's weakest point (Shy 1978:57). One problem present throughout the war was that of "familiarity" between

officers and men. As early as 1775, Washington requested a pay raise for subalterns since "the allowance is inadequate to their rank and Service and is one great source of that Familiarity between Officers and Men which is incompatible with Subordination and Discipline" (Fitzpatrick 1931:386-87). Five years later, another example of this problem was provided by Washington's secretary when he described an officer's difficulty of commanding the respect of his men after the officer "...was seen shaving one of his men on the parade..." (Sevejda 1970:98).

In 1780 at Morristown, Washington remarked that the Army "...had made little progress in order and discipline, that in fact some corps had regressed" (Fitzpatrick 1937:425-426). Officers were also dismissed from service for such "ungentlemanlike behavior in drinking at public houses with soldiers at their expense...[and] for playing cards...with private soldiers" (Sevejda 1970:129).

Similar examples are available from New Windsor Cantonment. As late as April 1783, a Lieutenant of the 2nd Massachusetts Brigade was tried "...charged with conduct unbecoming the character of an officer by inviting several noncommissioned officers of the 2nd

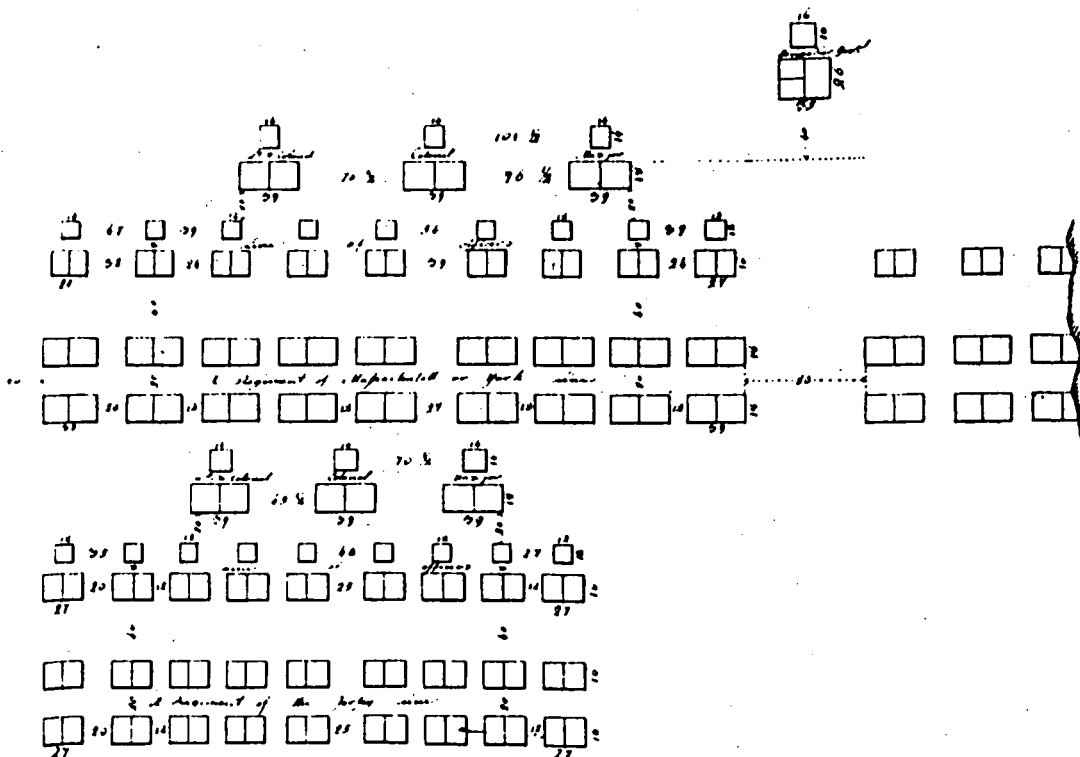


Figure 3. Plan and Disposition for the Huts of the Winter Following 1782. Pickering Papers Microfilm, United States Military Academy, West Point.

Connecticut regiment to his quarters at Mr. Cranes in the highlands, Drinking and gaming with them..."(Fitzpatrick 1938b:339).

The problem of formalizing officer interaction with the troops provides an insight into the ideology of the construction of separate kitchen buildings. In the social intimacy of preparing food and serving it to officers, enlisted men (as servants) were kept apart. Separate, specialized buildings were constructed to maintain the proper social distance between master and servant, while providing the proximity needed to carry out the tasks. These kitchens may be viewed as structures to separate officers from their men, while putting them together to enforce the social hierarchy.

SUMMARY

This discussion has examined the Continental Army's last winter encampment at New Windsor as an artifact, reflecting the social conditions and processes which produced it. The production of social space is viewed as especially relevant to archaeological analysis. The spatial configuration of the cantonment developed in a manner to reduce structural conflict within the army and between the local inhabitants and the soldiers.

Regiments from two different regions were separated by a stream and swamp. These regiments included the "egalitarian" and "aristocratic" portions of the officer corps. Within a single brigade, the social hierarchy is reflected in the hut placement on the landscape, the distance between buildings, the size of the buildings, and the related "servant" facilities. The maintenance of "proper" social distance between officers and enlisted men servants was facilitated by separate kitchen buildings for the officers where their servants were housed.

The relationship between the community and the encampment was eased by the placement of permanent markets at the cantonment. Townspeople were guarded at these locations and protected from the soldiers. In addition, officers were required to remain in camp with their men and conduct frequent, unscheduled roll calls to keep their men at camp and out of trouble.

The construction of a Public Building for worship at New Windsor is evidence of the role of formal ideology in the Continental Army. Washington's address to the officers in this building resolved the conflict among the officers regarding their dissatisfaction with Congress. The role of sermons as revolutionary propaganda and the function of the Temple as a masonic lodge have not yet been examined.

The American Revolution changed the government from monarchy to republic, but its effect on ordinary people is still debated.

The general conclusion of social historians is "...that the overall economic impact of the war was to make America less, not more, democratic " (Shy 1978:56).

The American population was set in motion as never before, but there is slight evidence that wealth and power were systematically shorn from one class of men and bestowed on another, or even that there was any substantial effort to do so. Although individual faces changed, the same kind of men governed after independence as before (Bushman 1978:62).

The organization of the Continental Army's encampment at New Windsor reflected the social structure of the society that created it. Not only were material objects (such as log huts) built, but their construction included ideological creations such as social space. The investigation of the spatial relationships present within the cantonment has been employed to relate the processes which produced them and social relations produced by them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A cooperative agreement between the Town of New Windsor, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission enabled this research. I would like to thank those who produced this agreement, particularly Jim Gold, John Lovell, Howard Miller and John Petro. The archaeology unit of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Bureau of Historic Sites conducted the fieldwork and contributed to the research and analysis reported here. I appreciate the comments of Paul Huey, Lois Feister and Dennis Wentworth on an earlier version of this paper.

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